UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.109/1182
5 April 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION
WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING
OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL
COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

ST. HELENA

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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ST. HELENA 1/

I. GENERAL

1. The Territory of St. Helena, which is administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, consists of the main island of St. Helena and two dependencies: the island of Ascension and a group of islands forming the dependency of Tristan da Cunha.

2. Situated in the South Atlantic Ocean, approximately 1,900 kilometres from Angola and 2,900 kilometres from Brazil, the Territory covers a total land area of 412 square kilometres. Ascension lies 1,200 kilometres to the north-west of St. Helena, and Tristan da Cunha and the other small islands forming that dependency are approximately 2,400 kilometres to the south of it. St. Helena, where Jamestown, the capital of the Territory, is located, is the largest island, with an area of 122 square kilometres. It has a tropical climate tempered by trade winds which blow throughout the year.

3. The population of St. Helena, excluding its dependencies, was 5,664 as of February 1987, the date of the last census. Approximately one third is resident at Jamestown. The next largest communities are situated at Longwood, in the east of the island, and at Half Tree Hollow, in the north-west. The remainder of the population live in small cottage communities or single cottages.

II. CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

A. General

4. The St. Helena Constitution Order of 1988, which entered into force on 1 January 1989, replaced the Constitution of St. Helena and dependencies introduced on 1 January 1967. Under the new Constitution, the Governor and Commander-in-Chief (who is appointed by the Queen) administers the Government. He is assisted by an Executive Council and a Legislative Council.

5. The Legislative Council for St. Helena consists of the Speaker, three ex officio members (the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General) and 12 elected members. The Executive Council is presided over by the Governor and consists of the ex officio members mentioned above and five of the elected members of the Legislative Council. Although a member of both the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, the Attorney General has no vote in either body.

6. Elections are held by secret ballot at intervals of not more than four years by universal adult suffrage for those aged 18 years and older. Although two political parties are nominally in existence, since 1976 they have been inactive and elections have been held on a non-partisan basis.

7. The judicial system, based on the laws of the United Kingdom, is administered by the Supreme Court (there is a non-resident Chief Justice) and a Magistrate's Court presided over by the senior of the three magistrates sitting

at a session. There is also a Juvenile Court and a Small Debts Court. Provision exists for a Court of Appeal, consisting of three judges, which can sit at Jamestown or in London.

B. Action by the General Assembly

8. In her statement before the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on 29 October 1993, in explanation of vote on the draft decision on the question of St. Helena, the representative of the United Kingdom stated that as in previous years, the draft decision was unacceptable to her Government since it referred to military facilities on Ascension, an island which, although linked to St. Helena for administrative reasons, was not on the Committee's agenda. The suggestion that the very limited military facilities in question could be a source of concern regarding aggression or interference in neighbouring States was incomprehensible. Her Government's policy towards the British dependent Territories was conducted fully in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. 2/

9. On 10 December 1993, the General Assembly adopted, by a recorded vote of 101 to 2, with 51 abstentions, decision 48/424 on the question of St. Helena. By that decision, the Assembly urged the administering Power, in consultation with the Legislative Council and other representatives of the people of St. Helena, to continue to take all necessary steps to ensure the speedy implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in respect of the Territory and, in that connection, reaffirmed the importance of promoting an awareness among the people of St. Helena of the possibilities open to them in the exercise of their right to self-determination. The continued presence of military facilities in the Territory prompted the Assembly, on the basis of previous United Nations resolutions and decisions concerning military bases and installations in colonial and Non-Self-Governing Territories, to urge the administering Power to take measures to avoid the involvement of the Territory in offensive acts or interference against neighbouring States.

III. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A. General

10. St. Helena possesses few natural resources. Agriculture, largely of a subsistence nature, is the main economic activity on St. Helena. Food production is insufficient to supply the island's needs, and this, together with the lack of manufacturing industries, results in the importation of the vast majority of its requirements. The cost of living in St. Helena is higher than in the United Kingdom. There is no value-added tax.

B. Public finance

11. The main items of estimated revenue, including the British Government grant-in-aid, and expenditure for 1991-1993 were as follows:

(Thousands of St. Helena pounds) a/

	1991/92	1992/93
Revenue		
Direct taxes	750.2	695.5
Indirect taxes	939.4	932.2
Fines, fees and charges	170.6	131.5
Government rents and hires	57.6	72.6
Earnings of the Government	148.8	162.3
Treasury receipts	b/	1 485.2
Other	63.4	66.0
Total ordinary revenue	2 130.0	3 545.3
Grant-in-aid	3 424.4	3 526.1
Total	5 554.4	7 071.4
Expenditure		
Government	1 091.2	1 105.9
Finance and development	638.5	706.1
Pensions and gratuities	305.9	347.6
Public education	747.8	826.3
Public health	979.4	1 023.9
Social services	866.8	946.4
Agriculture and forestry	714.4	700.0
Public works	1 025.6	1 151.4
Other	51.3	37.8
Total	6 420.9	6 845.4

a/ The local currency is the St. Helena pound, which is equivalent to the pound sterling. St. Helena currency notes, introduced in 1976, and United Kingdom coins are legal tender.

b/ Not available.

12. The principal forms of taxation are income tax, land tax and withholding tax, which is payable by non-residents on incomes accruing in or deriving from the Territory, at a current rate of 25 per cent. Rates of tax on taxable income after allowed deductions are 10 per cent for the first £2,000 of taxable income, 20 per cent for the next £2,000 of taxable income and 25 per cent thereafter.

13. The Territory's statement of assets and liabilities as at March 1992 was as follows:

(St. Helena pounds)

Liabilities		Assets	
Deposits	1 953 481	Cash held locally by Ascension and Crown Agents, London	2 363 255
Special funds:			
Savings bank	6 535 210	Savings bank	6 190 873
Other funds	141 417	Other funds	141 225
Consolidated fund	1 049 106	Development Fund	12 400
		Advances	903 966
		Trading account	334 905
Total	9 679 214	Total	9 944 624

C. Development projects

14. The island itself is not economically viable and relies to a great extent on external aid. Aid from the United Kingdom covers budgetary assistance (grant-in-aid, at present on a three-year rolling disbursement programme); development aid projects; technical cooperation; and funds covering the island's shipping losses.

15. The St. Helena development programme is aimed at better use of limited national resources, reduced dependence on external aid and the creation of suitable employment opportunities. It is financed mainly through the overseas aid programme of the Government of the United Kingdom. Detailed proposals for individual projects are discussed by the Executive Council in the context of the annual budget (after negotiations between the island Administration and the Overseas Development Administration (ODA)), and subsequently ratified at the budget session of the Legislative Council.

16. It is anticipated that United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) cooperation would complement that of the major donor country. The first UNDP country programme for St. Helena (1987-1992) 3/ was formulated but never implemented. It is being superseded by the second UNDP country programme, which is largely a distillation of the previous programme and the result of continuing dialogue among the Government, ODA and UNDP. During this process a consensus emerged on the type of UNDP assistance that would meet the country's requirements most effectively.

17. UNDP resources will target three areas of concentration, namely, the universal pension scheme, tourist development and the livestock development programme. The net indicative planning figure for St. Helena was recommended at $2 million. 4/

18. Apart from UNDP, the only other important donor is the European Union, which is funding the reconstruction of the sea wall and ancillary facilities.

Estimated development aid expenditure, 1991-1993

(Thousands of St. Helena pounds)

	Approved total grant		Expenditure	
Projects	1991/92	1992/93	1991/92	1992/93
Agriculture and forestry	782.0	1 672.0	154.9	184.3
Public utilities	1 851.6	4 380.3	381.1	1 030.7
Fisheries	600.0	637.3	177.2	122.2
Social and administrative services	4 949.8	4 910.0	211.2	197.8
Administrative and miscellaneous services	35.0	35.0	40.2	24.4
Other	278.0	243.8	164.6	52.6
Total	8 496.4	11 878.4	1 129.2	612.0

D. Agriculture, land tenure and livestock

19. The total area of the island is 47 square miles, approximately two thirds of which is barren. Estimated figures of categories of land are as follows:

Land use	Hectares	Percentage
Arable	60	-
Gardens	326	3
Pasture	1 383	11
Forest/woodland	690	6
Scrub	2 630	21
Flax	325	3
Barren	5 550	46
Bad land	920	8
Urban	220	2
Total	12 104	100

20. All crops grown on the island are food or fodder crops, but the island is not self-sufficient in these products. The only export crop produced on the island is coffee. Some 1.5 tons of coffee were exported in February 1990. Potatoes are the main carbohydrate staple, although this is greatly supplemented by imported rice. There is no established system of recording quantities of produce sold on the domestic market. As an indication of the scale of domestic production, however, in 1991, purchases by the Grower's Cooperative were as follows: potatoes, 16.6 tons; cabbage, 3.6 tons; carrots, 2.9 tons; tomatoes, 2.0 tons; pumpkins, 1.8 tons; cauliflower, 1.2 tons; green beans, 1.0 tons; onions, 1.0 tons; other vegetables, 3.4 tons; and fruit, 1.1 tons. In 1991/92, 184.5 tons of potatoes and 27.5 tons of onions were imported.

21. Agricultural administration is carried out by the Chief Agricultural and Forestry Officer, who is a member of and responsible to the Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee of the Legislative Council, the body that sets agricultural policy.

22. The Agriculture and Forestry Department provides support services to smallholder producers, including agricultural loans through a revolving credit fund, which provided loans totalling £9,500 in 1992 and £1,459 in 1993. Other loans, such as those for the purchase of vehicles and other machinery, may be obtained from private or government sources.

23. A scheme designed to encourage new farmers into agriculture by paying them a three-day week wage for two years was started in 1980. It was modified in 1991, when the period was extended to four years, but the income was reduced by 25 per cent per annum. Poor results have precipitated a decision to phase it

out, however. A new Farmers Assistance Scheme was set up to assist farmers by giving grants of 40 to 75 per cent of the investment in pasture establishment and improvement, water supply and livestock housing.

24. The St. Helena Growers' Cooperative Society provides seeds to many individuals and farmers, in addition to the large quantity imported by them. The Agriculture and Forestry Department sold some 90,718 seedlings in 1992/93. Some machinery (rotovators) and hand tools are available through private shopkeepers. Fertilizers and pesticides are supplied mainly by the Agriculture and Natural Resources Department.

25. Agricultural research is carried out on a range of agronomic subjects. The Prince Andrew School has an agricultural section, to which most of the agricultural education is confined.

26. The number of employees involved in agriculture and livestock services totalled 34, and the estimated expenditure during 1992/93 was £103,736.

27. The livestock raised in the Territory are mainly cattle, sheep and pigs. Livestock production totalled 1,589 in 1991/92 and 2,735 in 1992/93.

E. Fisheries

28. The principal resource of the Territory is its fishing industry. Large tunas are available all year round. Skipjack and other species of tuna represent the greatest potential and are normally present from February to June. Mackerel and various demersel species, such as grouper, are also available all year round. Offshore resources associated with the two known seamounts within the 200-mile exclusive fishing zone were quantified by the offshore survey, 1985-1987.

29. The St. Helena Fisheries Corporation was established in November 1979 by an ordinance enacted by the Governor. Employment within the Corporation during 1992/93 consisted of 14 workers, excluding fishermen.

30. A Directorate of Fisheries was established in order to carry out government duties and responsibilities in the fisheries sector and to administer offshore licensing operations.

31. Local sales and export statistics are as follows:

Year	Local sales		Exports	
	Tons	Value (pounds sterling)	Tons	Value (pounds sterling)
1986/87	107.69	98 311	85.63	85 666
1987/88	117.71	110 670	77.12	78 120
1988/89	116.98	115 805	92.46	88 057
1989/90	109.80	121 522	154.54	128 124
1990/91	83.21	108 406	154.53	128 124
1991/92	88.91	118 782	26.66	38 399
1992/93	69.66	108 364	87.06	115 056

F. Industries

32. There is no large-scale industry on St. Helena. All crafts are practised on a cottage-industry basis, with technical, financial and marketing facilities provided by the Government, through the Home Industries Section. There is no industrial development financed by outside investment.

G. Transport, communications and utilities

33. There is no airport or airstrip on St. Helena, and no railway. The only port is Jamestown, which provides good anchorage for ships of any size. The island's main link with the outside world continued to be the RMS St. Helena, which is owned and chartered by the St. Helena Shipping Company, Ltd., and which plies between Avonmouth in the United Kingdom and Cape Town in South Africa, calling at the Cape Verde islands and Ascension. The service receives an annual subsidy of some £2 million from the United Kingdom.

34. During 1992/93, a total of 392,139 cubic metres of treated and untreated water were supplied for domestic, commercial and agricultural purposes. The supply of treated water remained at a reasonable standard.

35. Electricity for the Territory is supplied by the Energy Division of the Public Works and Services Department. A total of 5,535,910 kilowatt-hours were generated in 1992/93. Electricity is generated by Ruperts Valley power station. Fuel is imported in bulk and pumped ashore. There are 45 kilometres of high voltage line carrying electricity to most of the Territory and 112 distribution transformers are connected en route.

H. Banking and credit

36. The only bank is the Government Savings Bank, which does not offer the full range of normal commercial banking facilities. Limited credit facilities for house-building and home improvements are made available on very easy terms through the Government Housing Loans Board and the Government Savings Bank. Total deposits at the Government Savings Bank as at 31 March 1991 amounted to £3,455,379, compared with £3,320,504 during the previous year.

37. All financial transactions are ultimately channelled through London, and United Kingdom bank rates apply. No exchange controls operate on the island, and to the extent that overseas transactions are channelled through London, United Kingdom control measures apply. The deficit on the island's trading operations is, in effect, borne by the United Kingdom Treasury grant-in-aid. Local currency in circulation as at 31 March 1993 was £2,848,427, comprising £2,508,467 in notes and £339,960 in coins.

I. International trade

38. St. Helena's main imports are food products and tobacco, motor spirits and fuel oil, animal feed, building materials, motor vehicles, machinery and spare parts. Its only exports are fish and handicrafts. Its main trading partners remain the United Kingdom and South Africa. Others include Brazil and Ascension.

IV. SOCIAL CONDITIONS

A. General

39. Living standards are reported to be improving on St. Helena, as various development projects continue to employ both skilled and unskilled workers. Wages remitted to St. Helena by workers on Ascension and the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) have enabled many families to build new homes or to improve the standard of existing ones. The rate of inflation continued to increase, however. There has been a continued rise in the retail price index, which increased by 8 per cent in 1992/93.

40. According to the administering Power, there are no racial or cultural problems in the Territory, which consists of a homogeneous English-speaking community with a single education system.

B. Labour

41. The Government's labour policy is to create the maximum number of job opportunities and to provide as much training as capacity and funds permit. Following the collapse of the flax industry, the Government of St. Helena has become the major employer of labour in the Territory, with the Ascension island "User" and Falkland Islands (Malvinas) organizations fulfilling a vital role. According to the administering Power, 536 St. Helenians were employed as at

March 1993 on Ascension, 242 on the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) and 132 in the United Kingdom, for tours of one to two years.

42. The territorial Government continued to give serious consideration to the restructuring of employment and decreed that it could not continue to guarantee employment for everyone. Community work is available for the unemployed. Those who are unable to obtain a position on this scheme and are willing and able to work can apply for unemployment allowances. Community employment is available to both men and women.

43. At the end of March 1993, there were 100 persons of both sexes under 60 years of age employed to do community work. Seasonal employment is provided for between 20 and 30 women in fish processing by the St. Helena Fisheries Corporation, a statutory Corporation, and St. Helena Canneries.

44. The principal categories of wage earners in St. Helena are agricultural labourers, skilled and general labourers, mechanics, engineers, motor drivers, building tradesmen, apprentices, fishermen and boatmen.

45. In 1992/93, average weekly rates of pay were £39 for government agricultural and general labourers and £44 for commercially hired labourers in the same category; £42 for government skilled labourers and £51 for skilled labourers in the commercial sector; and £21 for government apprentices (£20 for apprentices in the commercial sector).

C. Public health

46. According to the administering Power, the general state of health of the population is good and its nutritional status is generally satisfactory. Public health is the responsibility of the Public Health Committee of the Legislative Council. The Chief Medical Officer administers the Public Health Department. The Territory has one general hospital at Jamestown, a mental hospital at Half Tree Hollow and a handicap day centre at Longwood. There are six rural health clinics at strategic sites in the Territory, which are visited regularly by doctors and community nurses. Recurrent public health expenditure in 1992/93 was £1,032,200.

D. Social security and welfare

47. The Employment and Social Services Committee of the Legislative Council has general responsibility for the Employment and Social Services Department, and is concerned with a wide range of matters. The annual budgetary provision for 1992/93 for social security and welfare was £905,000.

48. At the end of March 1993, 420 needy persons received income-related benefit payments in the form of cash issues varying from £17.05 to £35 per week. A Home Help Scheme was launched in 1981, and at the end of March 1993 employed some 50 women. In addition, unemployment allowance varying from £11.50 upwards is payable.

E. Education

49. Education is free. Attendance is compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 15 years, but the power to exempt children over 15 years lies with the Education Committee. There are 11 schools in the Territory. The number of teachers in 1993 was 117, 4 of whom were St. Helenians. In 1992/93, school enrolment totalled 1,185 (1,164 indigenous). Illiteracy in the Territory was estimated at 1 per cent of the total population over 7 years of age.

50. Total expenditure on education in 1992/93 was £926,240.

V. DEPENDENCIES OF ST. HELENA

A. Tristan da Cunha

51. Information on the island of Tristan da Cunha for the period ending in 1993 is contained in a previous working paper on St. Helena prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1152, paras. 48-70). No further information has been received by the Secretariat.

B. Ascension

52. Information on the island of Ascension for the period ending in 1988 is contained in a previous working paper on St. Helena prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1071, paras. 119-129). No further information has been received by the Secretariat.

Notes

1/ Information regarding St. Helena and the dependency of Ascension has been derived from published reports and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations, on 28 May and 20 September 1993.

2/ See A/C.4/48/SR.13.

3/ DP/CP/STH/1; see also A/AC.109/1105.

4/ DP/CP/STH/2; see also DP/1993/SCPM/L.3/Add.13.